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CANE furniture—a generic name that includes in the materials used the reeds that grow on marshes and in the Southern swamps—constitutes an increasingly important branch of trade. Its lightness and the many ornamental forms into which it can be woven, the soft enamel-like beauty of the surface render acceptable separate articles of the kind in an otherwise completely furnished room. Whilst the natural growth of some canes assumes surprising dimensions, reeds supply the most delicate rounded form. Reed pith is also worked up as a component part of structure and ornament, being rendered as hard and flexible as its outside coat. We look to these materials for fanciful forms as suited to natural pliability. Veinings of leaves, fan-like vegetative developments, delicate and varied interlacings characterise the work. As to strength, it is sufficient to note that a small circular footstool open below and of delicate lace-like pattern in open work will support the weight of a man. It admits of varied combinations as regards use as, for instance, in the hinged tops of ladies' work tables that on being raised disclose a recess in which rests a woven basket that may be withdrawn, various compartments nestling round in bright hues, contrasts well with the tones of the cane. We consider the chef d'œuvres of this work to be displayed in rocking-chairs of graceful uninterrupted curved forms that conform to the contour of the body. Then we have tables the border of which show suspended festoons in fine intricate patterns. This furniture should neither be stained nor painted until it has been in use two years, for a dampened cloth will restore at any time the beauty of surface.

THE Philistines of art, a class always on the watch for occasions of merriment though not always successful in determining incongruities, may obtain some legitimate fun in inspecting a so-called "rococo buffet" in one of our most prominent furniture stores, not a Louis XV imported specimen but a home attempt at rendering the style. It is covered all over with shell and rock curves pertaining to that style. The rock curves, designed to represent the circular whorls seen frequently on the face of rocks washed by the sea are duplicates of each other and appear rather as the work of the lathe than of the chisel and instead of being placed on shelving or concave surfaces are presented as uprights; so, too, their escaping channels, giving to the draft like rings the appearance of being mounted on stems. As a crowning piece,

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

stems and turned circles are ranged in a row with absurd effect. The significance of the rock curves must have been unknown to the designer, who even employs them to overlap each other. The object, too, of rococo, which, fantastic as it was, had one artistic aim, that of embellishing surfaces with inlays of various ornamental materials, and to which contour of form was subordinated in giving play to light and shade, is here wholly lost.

ARTISTIC furniture dealers have a grievance. They allege that their customary equanimity of mind, arising from the consciousness they have done their best for the season's supply is sadly disturbed by flocks of lady visitors fresh from the Paris Exhibition, who chat mellifluously, wearisomely and with an air of intimate familiarity, of styles Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI, and, with the evident belief that they are imparting special information to the dealer, proceed to criticise from their ideal point of view, and often disparagingly, the articles that arrest their attention. The dealers say they have too much of this; that they really know what they are at, and we believe them. "Bless their innocence!" said a furniture man, "I haven't the heart to destroy illusions that give their possessors self-satisfaction." Indeed, it is one thing to see an old style, and another to catch its spirit and realize its distinctive features. In the modifications demanded by adaptations to present requirements, and securing original treatment, new combinations are formed, various accessories dropped and contours altered. Each nation, too, has its own specialties of taste. The keynote struck by the more pretentious character of the French furniture and the influence of Parisian associations will in time, through everyday surroundings, weaken in the minds of these fair and erring critics, and their naturally sensible and just judgments again assert themselves.

LETTERS written on vellum and paper are gilded in three ways. In the first a little size is mixed with the ink and the letters are written or formed with a quill pen; when they are dry a slight degree of tackiness is produced by breathing on them, upon which the gold leaf is immediately applied, and by a little pressure is made to adhere. In the second method some white lead or chalk is ground up with strong size, and the letters are made with this by means of a brush; when the mixture is almost dry the gold leaf may be laid on and afterwards burnished. The last method is to mix up some gold powder with size and form the letters with this by means of a brush. It is supposed that this latter method was used by the monks in illuminating their missals, psalters and rubrics.

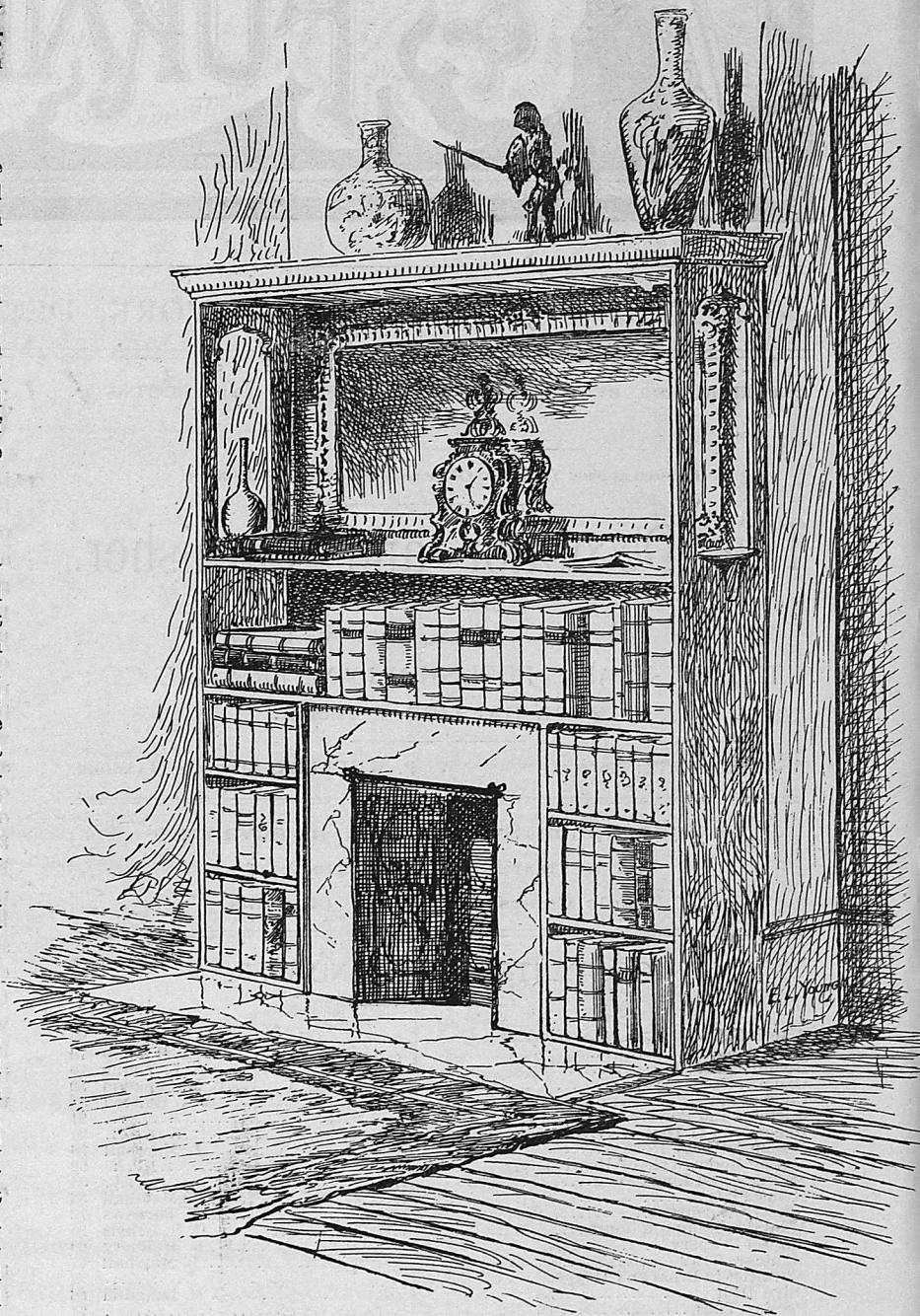
AS some of our readers may possess some curiosity as to how the leaves of books and letter paper are gilded we will here describe the process. A quantity of paper is cut smooth and even at the edges, and clamped by a press, which leaves each side to be gilded protruding in a horizontal position. A composition of four parts of Armenian bole and one of candied sugar which has been ground in water to a proper consistence and to which the white of an egg is then added, is laid on by a brush. The coating when nearly dry is smoothed by a burnisher, which is generally a curved piece of agate, very smooth, and fixed in a handle. It is then slightly moistened with water. The gold leaf is now taken up with a ball of cotton wool from the leathern cushion, and applied on the moistened surface. When dry it is burnished by rubbing the agate over it repeatedly from end to end. A piece of silk or India paper is usually interposed between the gold and the burnisher.

WE never encountered any inquiry or met with any explanation as to why the ancient Venetians bordered their mirrors with bands of black and red woollen cloth in alternate angles projecting from the inside edges of the frames. The arrangement must surely have had for its object a partial relief of the vision from the gloss of the glass by force of simultaneous contrast, a result to which gilded frames do certainly not contribute. Some of the advantage, if any, of the juxtaposition of such widely different materials as glass and wool, might possibly be achieved by inserting the lustreless black and red wool textiles in some of the recessed portions, or grounds of carved gilded frames.

WILTON rugs, with their soft textures on which appear flower and leaf and foliage designs, some distinct in color and form, others in lightest of light tints, here and there relieved by touches of intense colors and seeming to fade away in a white or tinted haze, serve for the upholstering of a number of dining room suites, to which they impart quite a distinguished appearance.

THERE is one department of decoration, that of illumination of paper or vellum, in which extremely minute detail, well carried out has a specific charm as not only heightening intrinsic value by the evident labor bestowed but by general effect in beautifying the design. In delicacy of handling in the illuminating process and minute but faultless execution the whole range of ancient ornamentation offers nothing comparable to the early Irish manuscripts and those produced in the same style in England. Wyatt, the great English artist, says that when in Dublin he examined with great care that wonderful manuscript, the book of "St. Kelis," of the 9th century, some of the ornaments of which he attempted to copy, but gave up in despair. He examined the pages for hours together without detecting a false line or irregular interlacement. In the space of one-fourth of an inch square he counted with a magnifying glass no less than one hundred and eight interlacements of a slender ribbon pattern of white edged with black. The work in this book is so marvelously exquisite that tradition alleges that its designs were traced by some spiritual agency.

AN excellent filling in of a corner of a room is obtained by low cabinets corresponding in some respects to the old hanging cabinets but resting on the floor. A direct service they perform is in hiding the angles of the wall to which their shapes at back conform. They serve also as convenient pedestals for statuary groups and vases. One form has the upper compartment enclosed by plate glass, the shelf at the edges being grooved to afford support for ornamental plates with hooks



A VERY SIMPLE AND ECONOMICAL MANTEL ARRANGEMENT. (See Page 70.)

above for saucers. An open compartment in center with broad border of light tracery provides accommodation for bric-a-brac. Where the whole cabinet is open, and in many divisions, an extremely handsome effect is obtained with shelves of Mexican onyx, these necessarily varying in their patterns, the soft vapory cloudiness of which with tints exquisitely gradated by volcanic fires form their great charm.